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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 004808

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/01/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT TALABANI'S CHIEF OF STAFF COMMENTS ON ELECTIONS, TORTURE INVESTIGATIONS

REF: BAGHDAD 4776

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert S. Ford
for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

[11.](#) (C) SUMMARY: Kamiran Karadaghi, President Talabani's Chief of Staff, told PolOff on November 29 that the Shia List was increasingly concerned about its prospects in the December elections, and predicted that former Prime Minister Allawi would fare even worse than he did in the elections last January. In response to PolOff's query about the Kurdish Islamic parties' public split from the main PUK/KDP alliance, Karadaghi dismissed concerns that this harmed the Kurds' chances in the election. Of more concern than the Kurdish Islamic parties, warned Karadaghi, was the ongoing threat of PKK activities in Iraq, citing two parties suspected to be fronts for the PKK. Finally, Karadaghi expected nothing to come of the committee chaired by Kurdish Deputy Prime Minister Rowsch Shaways, citing Shaways indecisiveness. END SUMMARY.

(U) Election Predictions

[12.](#) (C) Kamiran Karadaghi, President Talabani's Chief of Staff, told PolOff in a meeting on November 29 he believed the Shia List was increasingly concerned about its prospects in the December elections. The marja'iyah is getting active, he warned, pointing to recent comments by the son of Ayatollah al-Najafi calling for the faithful to support the Shia List. Karadaghi predicted the Shia Islamist list would not win a large majority of the votes this time. He further opined that even an alliance with the Kurds would not result in the two-thirds majority needed to control the Assembly. This means that the smaller parties will have a disproportionate amount of power as swing votes, remarked Karadaghi.

[13.](#) (C) As to former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's chances, Karadaghi claimed that Allawi was increasingly unpopular with the Shia. "The last time (in the January elections), Allawi got one million votes in the South, but he was in the government then," said Karadaghi. Allawi's remarks about human rights being as bad as during the Saddam regime would cost him votes.

(U) Splits Within the Kurdish Alliance?

[14.](#) (C) In response to PolOff's query about the Kurdish Islamic parties' public split from the main PUK/KDP alliance, Karadaghi dismissed concerns that this harmed the Kurds' chances in the election. The Islamic Movement of Kurdistan (IMK) and the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU) were both moderate groups, Karadaghi claimed, characterizing the IMK in particular as the "Muslim brotherhood of Kurdistan."

[15.](#) (C) Karadaghi went on to state that the Kurdish Islamic parties remain on very friendly terms with both the Kurdish Regional Governments (KRG) in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah. The difficulty, he explained, was the Islamic groups did not agree with the main Kurdish parties on the distribution of seats within the Alliance. In the last election, according to Karadaghi, the KIU was allocated six seats; this time, due to the likelihood that the Kurdistan Alliance would garner fewer seats overall they were only offered four seats. This led to the split, since the KIU believed that they could do better on their own. However, Karadaghi stressed that the KIU still intended to ally themselves politically with the Kurdistan Alliance after the elections.

(U) The Specter of the PKK

[16.](#) (C) Of more concern than the Kurdish Islamic parties to Talabani, warned Karadaghi, was the ongoing

threat of PKK activities in Iraq. The Turkish Ambassador had presented Talabani with information that two groups on the election registration list were actually fronts for the PKK: List 779 and List 713, the People's Democratic Party and the Justice and Reconstruction Party, respectively. Karadaghi reported that these groups were banned in Kurdistan, but had apparently managed to slip past the monitors in the IECI. (Comment: As best we can tell, the IECI does no monitoring or even checking of such political entities. End Comment.) According to Karadaghi, Talabani remarked that "Iraq is still not a real state," and remains incapable of monitoring against overt foreign influence in internal affairs.

(U) Torture Investigations Will Go Nowhere

17. (C) PolOff brought up the increasing reports in the press on allegations of torture by elements in the Iraqi government, particularly stories about torture in the Ministry of Interior's "Bunker." Karadaghi replied that Deputy Prime Minister Rowsh Shaways was asked to chair the government's committee investigating charges against the Ministry of Interior, but that he personally expected nothing to come of the investigations. Shaways is weak and "not independent at all," confided Karadaghi. Instead, Shaways belongs to KDP Leader Masud Barzani and will not stand for anything without direct instructions from Barzani, Karadaghi cautioned.

(U) Comment

18. (C) Karadaghi affects an attitude of detachment, repeatedly telling Embassy officials that he is neutral in Kurdish politics since he is not affiliated with either the KDP or the PUK. However, Karadaghi is a fairly reliable interlocutor for the Embassy on PUK redlines, and is often used as a proxy by Talabani to relay Talabani's frustrations with the Embassy. For example, Karadaghi reflected Talabani's frustration on the topic of turning over the NATO house to Talabani's control (over which Talabani and Prime Minister Jafari nearly came to blows.) During the Ambassador's meeting with Talabani, Karadaghi interjected to remind Talabani about the house, and opened his meeting with PolOff by demanding the keys to the house.
KHALILZAD